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The third season of excavation at Tell es-Sultan under the direction of Dr. Kathleen Kenyon of the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem began in early January. The American School is not participating officially in the work at Jericho this year. However, Ivan Kaufman, a student at Union Seminary, and I are with the expedition on the invitation of Dr. Kenyon.

The results of the first two seasons have been published by Dr. Kenyon and by Dr. A. D. Tushingham. The scope of this letter is limited to some personal impressions of Tell es-Sultan and a few of the more significant developments of the current season.

I have been impressed with the small area of archaeological sites in this section of the Near East. One should perhaps expect this, for the slow transition from nomadic to community life must have been effected on a modest scale. Nevertheless it is surprising that the limits of the Bronze and Iron Age Jericho are only slightly larger than those of the Neolithic. One cannot be sure that the nine-acre area of the present tell represents the maximum occupation at Jericho. Still it is indicative of the small scale on which the ancient phases of Jericho were built.

In contrast to the limited horizontal extent of Tell es-Sultan, stands its great height. The present surface is some fifteen to eighteen meters above virgin soil. This becomes more impressive as one realizes that the mound has suffered great denudation. There is nothing left of Iron Age Jericho except around the outer rim of the tell. The remnants of the Late Bronze city are limited apparently to a section on the east side of the tell overlooking the well-known spring. The surviving features of the Middle Bronze Age are restricted to the city's defensive system, which is found in the upper slopes of the tell. Any digging on the top of the mound quickly reveals Early Bronze levels. Consequently the stratification is predominantly Early Bronze and Neolithic. The depth of deposits from the Early Bronze Era is impressive. Nevertheless these are surpassed by the Neolithic strata which attain an amazing depth of from twelve to fifteen meters.

The work this season has produced many significant results.

A. Neolithic Age The Kenyon expedition in 1952 discovered in the west trench a great stone city wall on a pre-pottery Neolithic level. This established the antiquity of Jericho and was the primary basis of Tushingham's statement that "Jericho is the oldest known city in

the world." (BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGIST, September 1953, p.52.) An earlier and equally impressive Neolithic city wall was discovered about a month ago. This has been one of the season's outstanding discoveries and establishes the primacy of Jericho with an even greater degree of certainty.

Near the close of last season seven skulls were found in a pre-pottery Neolithic level. The extraordinary feature of this discovery was that an ancient artist had plastered these skulls in an effort to restore the appearance of life-likeness.

Perhaps we have discovered this year a solution of the mystery of these plastered skulls. Just under typical Neolithic plastered floors a number of skeletal remains have been found. The surprising feature is the mutilated state of many of the skeletons. Some are without heads and in two instances there appeared merely a conglomerate mass of human bones. Strangest of all was the discovery of a skeleton with two heads, neither of which was in a normal position. All of this suggests that the persons here interred suffered violent death at the hands of a foe. The victors may have dismembered and decapitated their victims. Possibly the plastered skulls are in some way to be related to the procedure dimly reflected in these deposits.

At the beginning of the season Dr. Kenyon called to our attention the scalloped walls of the so-called "round house". The Neolithic city wall (the only one known at that time) had obviously been built on top of the collapse of the "round house", thus proving the priority of the latter to the city wall. Further excavation has shown clearly that these scalloped walls do not form a round house but are parts of a large building erected about a central hall. The building is too large to suppose that it was constructed for domestic purposes. Furthermore in the central hall there is an elaborate basin which might be ceremonial in function. Perhaps we have found Jericho's Neolithic temple.

B. Early Bronze Age The walls of the Early Bronze Age city have been rebuilt or at least undergone repairs no less than fourteen times. These multiple restorations are obvious only on careful examination. A casual observation suggests that the Early Bronze Age is represented by two parallel mud brick walls surrounding the city. This impression must now be modified. In a new trench across the northern end of the tell a third mud brick Early Bronze Age city wall has been discovered. This enhances our estimate of the Early Bronze Age as one of the periods of the city's greatest vigor. Excavations between the two previously known Early Bronze city walls have revealed two earlier parallel transverse brick walls. Their function is not clear.

The defensive walls of Early Bronze Age Jericho are in some respects the most spectacular survival of the ancient city. The west trench has now revealed that the protective system of the city included two previously unknown outer ditches paralleling the walls. There must have been a period of some years when the site was unoccupied, for the ditches eventually were filled with silt and above them rest structures belonging to the Early Bronze-Middle Bronze Age, 2100-1900 B. C.

C. Middle Bronze Age It has been pointed out that little of the Middle

Bronze Age city survives except its system of defense. Its most impressive feature is a massive stone revetment surrounding the city, familiar to scholars from the earlier excavation of the site. The current expedition in 1952-53 expanded our knowledge of this phase of the city's defenses. In the west trench there appeared two successive plastered embankments called glacis, each surmounted originally by a low wall of which a small section is still preserved at one point.

With the opening this season of two new trenches, one on the north side and the other on the south, we eagerly awaited any additional light on the defenses of the Middle Bronze city. The south trench has revealed the revetment and a single glacis. No evidence for a second glacis on the south has appeared as yet. On the other hand, the north trench suggests (though the evidence is not conclusive) two glacis, the second built practically on top of the first. We must wait for the results of another year before we can define conclusively the northern defenses of the Middle Bronze Age city.

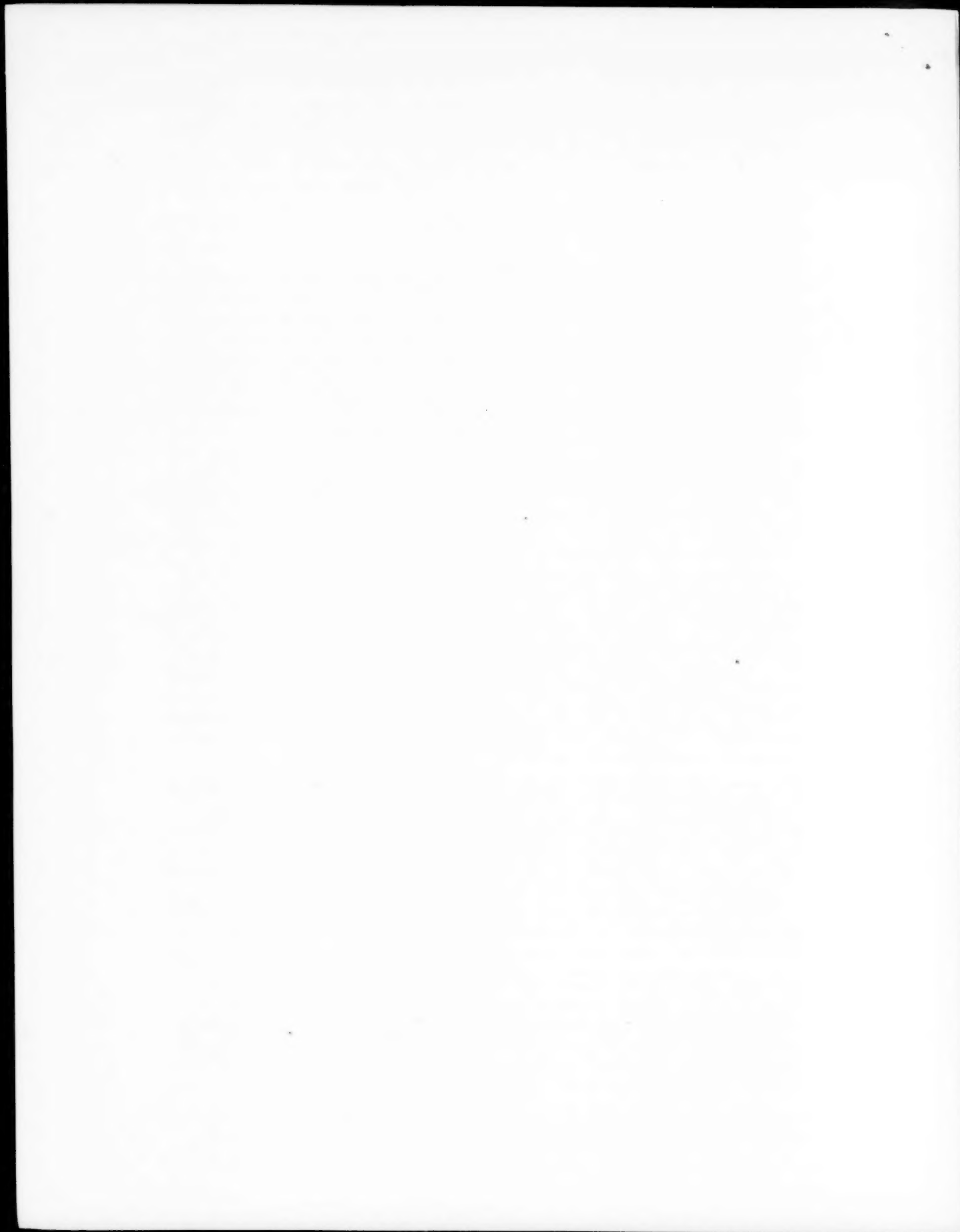
A new feature in the construction of the fill back of the glacis has appeared in the north trench. At the base of the fill and sloping down the tell is a stone wall about a meter in height and of single-stone thickness. The function of this wall must have been entirely structural. Probably it was intended to prevent the shifting of the fill.

D. The Late Periods This season's work has contributed little to our limited knowledge of Late Bronze Jericho, the city contemporary with Joshua. This will be disappointing to many whose primary interest in the excavation of Jericho lies in the light that might be shed on the Biblical account of the conquest of the city. The simple fact is that evidence of occupation in and structures of the Late Bronze Age - contemporary with Joshua - continues to be negligible. The lower outer areas of the two new trenches have revealed more Iron Age structures, confirming the witness of the west trench to the later Israelite occupation of Jericho.

E. The Necropolis A refugee camp now overlies a section of ancient Jericho's cemetery. In spite of the difficulties created by this situation, the work of excavating the tombs was continued this year under the able leadership of Miss Diana Kirkbride. Three Chalcolithic tombs were found. This is significant in view of the scarcity of evidence for a Chalcolithic settlement on the tell itself. Unfortunately no one of these tombs was in its original state. Two had been robbed and the third had been reused during the Early Bronze Age.

One very large Early Bronze Age tomb was excavated. Sixty Early Bronze-Middle Bronze (2100-1900 B. C.) tombs have been found. A distinctive feature of these tombs is their use of great vertical shafts, fourteen to sixteen feet deep each leading to a chamber set at the side of the shaft. Most chambers contained a single burial. Six of them had been reused during the Middle Bronze Age.

The expedition discovered only six tombs belonging to the Middle Bronze Age properly speaking. Their shafts were relatively small.



No tombs of the Late Bronze Age were found in this area. The finds from the tombs followed/^{the} general pattern of those of the two previous years, but the collapse of the ceilings in some of the tomb chambers had done considerable damage to their contents.

This report is written a week before the close of the season. Last year the plastered skulls were found on the very last day of the campaign. Possibly the next few days may yield equally significant finds. In any event, the results to date assure this third season of a worthy place in the history of the British School-American School expedition. Many problems still remain unsolved and our hopes for further light continue to be high as plans are made for the continuation of the excavations next year.

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